

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 6267

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AS

SUBJECT: AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL SITUATION - VIEWS OF
OPPOSITION FOREIGN AFFAIRS SPOKESMAN, ANDREW
PEACOCK

1. FOLLOWING ARE VIEWS EXPRESSED AT LUNCH SEPTEMBER 24
WITH OPPOSITION SPOKESMAN FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS ANDREW
PEACOCK. NOW ONLY 35, HE IS VIRTUALLY CERTAIN TO BE
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN THE NEXT LIBERAL
GOVERNMENT AND HE IS A FRONTRUNNER TO BE PRIME MINISTER
IN DUE COURSE.

2. ELECTIONS DEVELOPMENTS: PEACOCK SAID THAT THE LIBERAL
LEADERSHIP HAD DECIDED BY A VOTE OF 11 TO 1 NOT RPT NOT
TO PRESS FOR NEW ELECTIONS AT AN EARLY DATE, BUT TO KEEP
UP A SUSTAINED CAMPAIGN OF CRITICISM OF GOVERNMENT,
ESPECIALLY ALONG THE ECONOMIC FRONT. IT MIGHT BE THAT EVEN
BY EARLY 1975 THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION WILL GET SO BAD THAT
THE OPPOSITION WOULD HAVE TO FORCE THE ELECTION ISSUE.

3. PEACOCK SAID THAT LIBERALS ARE DEVOTING CONSIDERABLE
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STUDY TO NEW SOUTH WALES LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS

(HELD SEPT. 21). LABOR LOST GROUND IN THESE ELECTIONS, PARTICULARLY IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS SURROUNDING LARGE CITIES, WHERE THE LIBERALS HAD PREVIOUSLY LOST GROUND IN THE 1972 AND 1974 GENERAL ELECTIONS. IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND WHY THERE HAS BEEN A SHIFT AWAY FROM LABOR.

4. FUTURE LABOR LEADERSHIP: PEACOCK BELIEVES THAT DEPUTY PRIMIN CAIRNS WILL SUCCEED TO ALP LEADERSHIP AFTER LABOR LOSES NEXT ELECTION AND WILL THEN BE LABOR OPPOSITION LEADER. THIS PUTS HIM IN LINE TO BE PRIME MINISTER WHENEVER LABOR REGAINS POWER IN ELECTION AFTER THAT.

5. SPEAKING OF CAIRNS IN PERSONAL TERMS, PEACOCK FEELS THAT CAIRNS HAS NOT BASICALLY CHANGED HIS VIEWS AS LONG-TIME LEADER OF THE LEFT. CAIRNS IS A MAN OF NO GREAT INTELLECTUAL DEPTH - A FACT HE RECOGNIZES - BUT HE IS ARTICULATE AND POLITICALLY ASTUTE. IN LONGER TERM, CAIRNS WANTS TO CHANGE AUSTRALIA INTO SOCIETY ORGANIZED SOMEWHAT ALONG LINES OF CORPORATE STATE, HOWEVER DEFINED, WHERE GOVERNMENT HAS MORE CONTROL OVER ALL SECTORS OF NATIONAL LIFE. CAIRNS IS A GRADUALIST IN HIS APPROACH. AT THE MOMENT HE WANTS TO RESTORE A FEELING OF CONFIDENCE AMONG THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY. NONETHELESS, HE REMAINS "UNRECONSTRUCTED" AS A LEFTIST. THE LEFT WIELDS AN INFLUENCE WITHIN THE LABOR PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUS (WHERE CAIRNS' INFLUENCE EXCEEDS THAT OF WHITLAM) DISPROPORTIONATE TO ITS NUMBERS WITHIN THE ALP AS A WHOLE. THUS, LABOR CAUCUS IS MORE LEFTIST THAN THE PARTY.

6. FOREIGN POLICY: PEACOCK WILL BE OPENING UP ON A VARIETY OF FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES IN PARLIAMENT, BUT HE WILL TREAT THEM IN RELATIVELY LOW KEY. HE SPOKE AT SOME LENGTH ABOUT THE DANGERS TO AUSTRALIA RESULTING FROM CURRENT ATMOSPHERE OF GREAT POWER DETENTE AND HE WOULD HAVE TO SPEAK TO THESE DANGERS EVEN AT THE RISK OF SOUNDING LIKE A COLD WARRIOR.

7. AS TO US-AUSTRALIAN RELATIONS, HE THOUGHT THAT THEY WERE GOOD TODAY AND WERE NOT AN EXPLOITABLE ISSUE. HE DID NOT FEEL, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT IT WOULD SERVE A USEFUL CONFIDENTIAL

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PURPOSE TO ATTACK THE GOVERNMENT ON THE ISSUE OF US BASES AND FACILITIES IN AUSTRALIA. I SAID I THOUGHT THAT WAS SOUND CONCLUSIONS. HE BELIEVED THAT THE BEST LINE FOR THE LIBERAL PARTY TO TAKE, AT LEAST AT THIS TIME, WAS TO EMPHASIZE THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF US-AUSTRALIAN FRIENDSHIP BOTH BILATERALLY AND IN DEALING WITH THIRD COUNTRY AND GLOBAL ISSUES. THERE WAS SOME MERIT IN NOT BEING SPECIFIC, BUT IN MERELY STATING AND

RESTATING THE NEED FOR CLOSE FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION.
THIS COULD NOT FAIL TO BENEFIT THE OPPOSITION IN VIEW
OF THE WIDESPREAD LATENT FEELINGS OF GOODWILL AMONG
AUSTRALIANS TOWARDS AMERICANS.

8. PEACOCK DID NOT FEEL THAT US-AUSTRALIAN JOINT FACILITIES
WOULD EMERGE AS A STRONG ISSUE IN THE NEAR FUTURE. (NOTE:
FACT THAT PEACOCK DID NOT MENTION WHITLAM'S APRIL 3
STATEMENT ON FUTURE OF US FACILITIES OR IMMEDIATELY RELATED
ISSUES SEEMED SIGNIFICANT INDICATOR THAT HE AND HIS PARTY
DO NOT PROPOSE TO TAKE GOVERNMENT TO TASK ON THIS ISSUE
UNLESS THERE IS CLEAR CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT POLICY.)
GREEN

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